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The Living Witness

A Lawyer's Brief for Christianity

COLL. CHRISTI REGIS S.J.
BIB. MAJOR
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PREFACE

THERE is nothing in these pages that has not been said, and better said, a thousand times before, but the subject is one that can never lose its interest, and there are many who have never considered it from the point of view here discussed. I have thought that a brief presentation of this view in the plain language of everyday life might arrest the attention of some who would never read more elaborate and scholarly works, and thus lead to further inquiry. This plan of treatment has to some extent necessitated a sacrifice of that precision of statement which would otherwise be desirable, but I have written for the "Man in the Street," and not for the scholar or critic.

As a layman I have endeavored to avoid, as far as possible, all dogmatic statement. Where this has not been possible, as in all else, I have written in humble submission to the judgment of that Church of which I am an unworthy member.

THE AUTHOR.

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THE LIVING WITNESS

CHAPTER I

THE SUPREME QUESTION

A VERY large number of the wisest and best of the human race in all ages have believed, and yet believe, that our present life is but a preparation for another life beyond the grave, which is to continue through all eternity, and that whether we shall spend that eternity in happiness greater than the mind can conceive, or in misery the most unspeakable, is to be determined by ourselves during the present life. The existence of this belief is a fact which must impress itself upon our attention. Another fact which cannot be ignored is that the duration of the present life is for each one of us most uncertain. No one of us has any assurance that he will live to see the light of another day. This latter fact—the uncertainty of life—is impressed upon us in a thousand different ways. Whether or not we heed the lesson to be drawn from it, we are reminded of the fact itself daily

and hourly. This being so, how can we, as reasonable beings, neglect to inquire what foundation exists for the belief, so widely and persistently held by such a large number of our fellow men, that our eternal destiny, for weal or for woe, is to be determined by ourselves during the uncertain but certainly brief period of our natural lives? It is certain that this belief has influenced the whole course of human history. Hundreds of thousands have given their lives for their faith in it. Hundreds of millions have been enabled to cheerfully endure poverty, suffering and misery of all kinds by the hope of happiness beyond the grave. If this belief is well founded, then the question of what we shall do to attain the eternal happiness promised on the one hand, and avoid the eternal misery threatened upon the other, is certainly the most important that can ever present itself to us. The attainment of fame or fortune, the love of our fellow creatures, and everything which this uncertain but certainly brief existence can offer us sinks to insignificance beside it. That this is true, no reasonable person will deny. Every person of ordinary intelligence must admit that the two questions above stated are more important than any other that can engage our attention. This being true, it is certainly remarkable that so many persons, who are diligent and prudent in the ordinary affairs of life, manifest

an utter indifference to these most momentous questions. The causes of this indifference are various, but some of them may suggest themselves in the course of our discussion.

With reference to the primary question: I think we are warranted in saying that belief in a future life beyond the grave is the normal attitude of the human mind. Every soul that comes into being bears within itself the consciousness of its own immortality. Belief in the immortality of the soul, and a sense of dependence upon and responsibility to a higher power, appears to be natural to all mankind. It is found in all races, however low in the scale of mental development. No savage tribe has yet been found without some form of religion. The man who absolutely denies his immortality, and believes that his soul, or whatever it may be that animates his body, will perish with the body, if any such man really exists, is the product of culture and education. I say if any such man really exists, because I doubt that any man is ever really convinced that he is distinguished from the beasts of the field only by a higher degree of intelligence.

The philosophical arguments in favor of the immortality of the soul are beyond the scope of our present discussion, and I rest the argument upon the proposition that every human being, of normal intelligence, feels within himself the con-

sciousness that he himself, the spirit which animates the body and controls its actions, as distinguished from the matter of which the body is composed, will not perish with the body.

The really important question is the second: Whether we have it in our power to determine our destiny, whether for weal or woe, in the life beyond the grave? With reference to their attitude toward this last question, civilized people may be broadly divided into three classes: those who believe, those who deny, and those who have no opinion. Those who deny are comparatively few. By far the greater number of those who do not believe simply say: "I do not know." Whether this attitude, which has come to be known by the name of Agnosticism, is justified, is a question which every one who holds it is bound at his peril to ask himself. It is a maxim of human law that ignorance of the law is no excuse for its violation. This is a rule founded upon necessity, and its application in many cases leads to unjust results. But if it be true that for all our actions in this life, our thoughts, as well as our words and deeds, we will be held accountable to a higher power, which will have before it the facts and administer strict justice, committing no error in its conclusions either of law or fact, that power, which will be able to search out the inmost secrets of the heart, will determine whether our ignorance was excusable,

or whether it was wilful and culpable. In view of such a possibility, he who expects to rely upon the plea of ignorance may well examine his position with fear and trembling. It is another maxim of human law that every person is chargeable with notice of such fact as he might have learned by such inquiry as a person of ordinary prudence would have made under the same circumstances. This is a perfectly just and reasonable rule, and if it should be applied to the subject now under discussion, are we not bound to exhaust all the sources of knowledge open to us before the plea of ignorance can avail?

CHAPTER II

THE LIMITATIONS OF THE HUMAN INTELLECT

RELIGION in its broadest sense is the belief in and worship of a higher power, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, who knows all things, foresees all things and directs all things, and to whom we are responsible for all our actions, and who will reward the good and punish the wicked, a being whom we designate by the name of God. This belief proposes to us certain mysteries which it is beyond the capacity of the human mind to understand, and the further we progress in mental development the more difficult these mysteries become. To the mind of a child or an unlettered savage the teachings of religion present no difficulty. They are accepted along with a thousand other facts concerning the visible world around us, which, to such a mind, are equally mysterious and inexplicable. It is only when we have progressed in knowledge, and learned to inquire into the why and how of things, and have learned that the world of matter around us appears to be controlled by unvarying natural laws, that it be-

comes difficult for us to conceive of anything taking place otherwise than in accordance with those laws. The greater our progress in learning, the more apt we are to forget that our knowledge differs from that of the child only in degree and not in kind. We have traveled further than the child, but it is along the same road, and we have by no means reached its end. Nature still holds her secrets, and many of her laws are still to us a sealed book.

To say that we will not believe in what we do not understand, is both philosophically absurd and false in fact. We may take a grain of corn and analyze it and determine its chemical composition. A skillful artist could probably make an artificial grain which could not be distinguished from the natural one, having the same elements combined in the same proportions, and having the same outward form and appearance. But there is something in the natural grain which no human power can reproduce; the principle of life which causes the natural grain, under the influence of heat and moisture, to germinate and draw from the soil and atmosphere the necessary elements from which to create a full-grown plant with its stalk, leaves and flowers, and in time to reproduce other grains, each containing the same vital principle. The full-grown plant, with all the characteristics which distinguish the species to which it belongs, is, in

embryo, somehow contained in the grain, but no eye can perceive it, no analysis can detect it, and no intelligence can conceive its form or character. The most learned scientist can no more explain the nature of this vital principle than the child can explain why the pressing of a button on the wall causes the electric burners on the ceiling to flood the room with light. Nevertheless, we all believe in the existence of this vital principle in the grain of corn, and depend upon it for our daily bread.

Not only do we constantly accept as true and act upon propositions which we cannot understand, as in the case of the grain of corn, but there are in the visible universe around us facts which our minds are incapable of comprehending. It is impossible for us to conceive of space without limit, and on the other hand it is equally impossible to conceive of a limit to space.

We look at the stars in the heavens, and learn that astronomers have measured their distance from us. These figures are so vast that we have no standard of comparison to enable us to realize what they mean, but they are at least definite, and fix the boundary of the visible universe. But what lies beyond? Space. But what is space? The widest ocean must have a shore. The longest straight line must have a beginning and an end. A railroad train starting from the earth and travelling at the rate of sixty miles an

hour would require 4,000,000 years to reach the nearest of the fixed stars, and at the end of the journey the traveler would be no nearer the limit of space than when he started, because there is and can be no limit to space. This is a proposition entirely beyond the comprehension of the human intellect. The mind is utterly unable to grasp it. The human intellect is equally unable to form any conception of eternity. We cannot conceive of the beginning or end of time, or of the existence of anything which had no beginning and will have no end.

We cannot undertake to define the limit of man's intellectual power, but these illustrations show that there are limits, and that there are problems in the presence of which the most highly-developed human intelligence is as helpless as that of the little child.

It is equally impossible for us to form any definite conception of an object which has no form, dimensions or substance, and which is not cognizable by any of our bodily senses. Such an object is the soul which animates and controls our bodies, and constitutes our real selves. Something which possesses definite characteristics, so that when we speak of a person's character, we refer to his soul, and not to his body. Something which is capable of receiving, through the senses, impressions of material objects, and retaining these impressions, and thus acquiring

knowledge. Something which is capable of classifying and comparing and drawing conclusions from the knowledge derived from the bodily senses, and thus acquiring other knowledge. Something which is capable of planning, ordering and directing the movements of the body to the accomplishment of desired results. Something which is capable of feeling emotions, such as love and hatred, hope and fear, anger, joy and sorrow. Something which is so far distinct from the body that, up to a certain point, the body may be mutilated and portions of it destroyed without in any way affecting the identity of the person, or changing what we call his character.

The relations between the soul and the body; the manner in which they are united, and the manner in which they act upon and affect each other; why mental disease sometimes affects the body, and why an injury to or disease of certain organs of the body affects the mind, are wholly unknown to us after thousands of years of observation and study. Whatever it is, this mysterious something which we call the soul is wholly outside of and distinct from the material world which is cognizable by our bodily senses, with whose laws we are more or less familiar, and of which we may reasonably expect to learn more. It is so different from any object belonging to that world that any definite conception of it is

utterly beyond the capacity of the human intellect.

When we consider that God is likewise a spirit, so far similar in nature to the human soul that he exists outside of and beyond the material world known to us; that being the creator of that world, and the author of the laws that govern it, he is in nowise bound by those laws, but may suspend them at his pleasure; that he is infinitely superior to the human soul in power, and is not bound by the limitations which fetter and hedge it around at every turn, it is obvious that it is beyond our capacity to form any conception of his nature, power and attributes, except in so far as he may have chosen to reveal them to us, and enlighten our understanding as to them.

Considering the limitations of the human intellect, and the impossibility of our comprehending the nature of God, it is not surprising, but rather to be expected, that religion, which deals with the relations between man and God, should propose to us mysteries which we are unable to comprehend. But the fact that we cannot know anything of God, except what He may choose to reveal to us, does not justify us in saying that we do not know and cannot know anything whatever about him; because it is in his power to reveal to us what he desires us to know. That the knowledge thus revealed may present mys-

teries beyond our comprehension does not justify us in rejecting it, any more than we would be warranted in rejecting the testimony of our senses as to the material world because it presents similar mysteries.

The little child on the way to school does not know what makes the trolley car move, but it knows that it does move, and will carry it to its destination, and this knowledge is sufficient to enable the child to effect its purpose of getting to school. If the propositions presented for our acceptance by religion are supported by evidence sufficient to produce in our minds a conviction of their truth, it would be as unphilosophical to reject them on account of the mysteries which they contain as it would be for the farmer to refuse to plant corn because he cannot understand the mysterious vital principle contained in the lifeless grain, which causes it to germinate and reproduce the plant from which it came.

CHAPTER III

OUR SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE

THE sources from which our religious knowledge is derived are two, Conscience and Revelation. Conscience is that interior sense which approves of certain acts as being right, and condemns certain others as being wrong. That sense which produces a feeling of guilt and shame when we have done wrong, and a feeling of satisfaction when we have done right. Closely connected with this sense, and indeed forming a part of it, is a sense of responsibility to some power above and beyond ourselves, whose displeasure we dread, and whose approbation we desire. That this sense exists in every normal individual, and that it is natural, and exists independent of any external teaching, is a proposition to the truth or falsity of which each individual must be his own witness. Conscience is like an alarm clock, which ceases to awaken us when we cease to respond to its call. As conscience does not enforce its own mandates, and we have the power to obey or disobey them as we choose, it results that when we persistently

disregard them, its voice becomes less and less distinct, and finally is hardly heard at all. For this reason conscience speaks with varying force to different persons, and in some its existence appears to be forgotten. In the material world those whose bodily senses, such as sight and hearing, are not perfect, may often call upon others for confirmation of the impression produced by their own impaired senses. In like manner when conscience speaks to us with a feeble and uncertain voice, we may appeal to others to learn what it teaches them. Thus we find that the sense of responsibility to a higher power has existed in all mankind, in all ages, and has manifested itself in all countries and among all races in some form of appeal to that power for assistance and the pardon of sin. That this sense may have sometimes been perverted and manifested itself in forms of religion which are abhorrent to our conscience, does not alter the basic fact that the sense exists. If conscience comes from God, its teachings must be everywhere and at all times true, and must be the same to all persons. But conscience does not of itself offer a system of religion, which is left to be supplied by Revelation. That persons and peoples attempting to construct a system of religion without the light of revelation have reached divergent and erroneous results is what might have been expected. The universal belief in and

appeal to a higher power is a witness to the fact that such a belief is natural to man. In other words, that such is the teaching of conscience.

By Revelation we understand the direct communication by God to man of truths additional to and beyond those which he knows without learning, that is to say, those supplied by Conscience, and likewise additional to and beyond those which he is able to learn by any means at his command.

There is no philosophical difficulty in the way of such a communication. The practical difficulty is to determine its authenticity; in other words, to be sure that it really comes from God. Nothing has been more common in the world's history than the appearance of self-styled prophets, each claiming to be the bearer of a divine message to mankind. These alleged messages are often contradictory, and this fact furnishes one test which is of some assistance in determining their truth or falsity. There can be no such thing as contradictory truths. Every truth must be consistent with every other truth. Hence, all genuine communications from God must be consistent with each other, and every part must be consistent with every other part.

If God has seen fit to communicate to us other truths in addition to those which he has impressed upon our consciousness and those which we are able to learn ourselves, that is to say, to

make a revelation of himself and his will, it is not unreasonable to expect that he should make it in such a manner and under such circumstances as to evidence its authenticity. If he has commissioned messengers to speak to us in his name, it is reasonable to expect that he shall in some manner attest their authority. What form these evidences of authenticity may take, we are, of course, unable to anticipate. There being no particular form of attestation to be expected, it follows that any form which carries conviction of the authority of the messenger, or of the truth of the message, is sufficient to require credence. Also it seems not unreasonable to expect that the form of the communication and the manner of its attestation will vary with the circumstances of the time, the class of persons to whom the communication is addressed, and the purpose for which it is made.

These reflections naturally lead us to the consideration of the subject of Miracles. A miracle is commonly defined as an occurrence contrary to the laws of nature. To deny the possibility of miracles is to deny the omnipotent power of God. The power which hung the stars in the sky and set the sun and moon upon their courses, and established the laws of their motion, which created all things, animate and inanimate, and ordained the laws of their being, must have power to suspend or reverse these laws at his pleasure.

In determining the miraculous character of an event, the first difficulty is to be certain that the event actually occurred, and that the circumstances of its occurrence are known to us. The second difficulty is to be sure that the occurrence was really contrary to the laws of nature, because those laws are but imperfectly known to us. These considerations do not, however, disprove either the possibility of miracles or the fact of their occurrence. The restoration of life to a dead body in which decomposition had already begun would be so clearly contrary to the laws of nature that there could be no question as to the miraculous character of the event, and the only question would be as to the fact of its occurrence. Skeptics argue that it is more probable that the testimony as to the occurrence of a miracle is false than that a miracle has occurred. Whatever weight this argument may have in the case of any particular alleged miracle, it has no weight at all in support of the proposition that miracles never have occurred. There is no antecedent probability that miracles will not occur, and it may be readily conceived that the weight of evidence may be such as to make it more probable that miracles have occurred than that the testimony is false.

"It is hardly necessary to say that when I speak of "Evidence," "Testimony" and "Proof," I do not use these words in any techni-

cal sense, but as embracing any and all sources of information and inferences to be drawn from ascertained facts, which inform the mind and tend to produce a conviction as to the truth of the matter under consideration. Evidence has been defined by an eminent law writer as "That which tends to prove or disprove any matter in question, or to influence the belief respecting it. Belief is produced by the consideration of something presented to the mind. The matter thus presented, in whatever shape it may come, and through whatever material organ it is presented, is evidence." In this broad sense I use the word.

Pretermittng any question as to the meaning of the words "Natural Laws" as used in the definition of a miracle above given, it will not be denied that men are governed and influenced in their actions by certain general principles or tendencies to which we have given the name of Laws of Human Nature. Thus we say: "Self-preservation is the first law of nature," meaning human nature. These laws are not unvarying in the sense that they influence every individual in the same way, and the exceptions are so many that their operation cannot be relied upon in any particular instance with the same certainty as the laws governing material things. Thus we are absolutely certain that a stone thrown into the air will fall to the ground, and that water will not run up hill, but we cannot, with the same con-

fidence, predict what a particular person will do in a given set of circumstances. But the greater the number of persons in question, the more certainly we can anticipate their action. Thus it is contrary to human nature that a mother should abandon her child or put it to death. So well established is this law that we have no hesitation in saying of any particular mother, although a stranger, that it is not probable that she will abandon her child or put it to death. But it is not impossible that she will do so, because we know that some mothers have so acted. Taking a thousand mothers together, it is not only improbable that they will destroy their children, but we feel certain that they will not do so. We act upon knowledge of human nature in all the affairs of life with the same confidence that we act upon the laws of inanimate nature. It is a necessary part of the equipment of every professional man, and lies at the foundation of every successful business enterprise. Although modified to some extent by individual and racial peculiarities, in a broad and general sense human nature is the same at all times and in all places. As applied to mankind as a whole, its laws are as invariable in their operation as those which govern the material world.

CHAPTER IV

HOW SHALL WE KNOW THE TRUTH?

WE find in the world different religions, each claiming to be based upon divine revelation, and teaching contrary doctrines. It is obvious that so far as their teachings are at variance with each other, such teachings cannot all be based upon divine revelation. As to some of them, the supposed revelation was not genuine, or it has been misinterpreted. Every truth must be consistent with every other truth, and it is philosophically impossible that revelations from God, who is the source of all truth, should be inconsistent with each other. On the other hand, it is not impossible that all or a considerable number of these different religions may hold some doctrines in common. For example, they may differ widely in their teachings upon other points, and agree upon the unity of God. Nor is it antecedently impossible that as to a considerable number of these religions, the revelations upon which their doctrines purport to be based are genuine. But if that be the case, it is certain that some of them have misinterpreted the reve-

lations. Our knowledge of human nature would lead us to anticipate that however clear and definite the revelation might be, men would differ as to its meaning. This anticipation is realized in the fact, which we have before us, that men agree that certain statements in certain words are divine messages to mankind, but differ as widely as the poles as to the meaning of these messages. It is therefore obvious that the interpretation is as important as the message itself. The message is of no practical value to us unless we can ascertain its meaning. It is familiar to us that human laws require an authority to interpret them, and without such an authority society would fall into anarchy. When a statute is enacted by the legislature, however plain and simple its language, some question always arises, regarding which we are in doubt, until the court of last resort has decided the construction to be placed upon the statute. It may be said that this is due to the imperfection of human nature, and that there is no analogy between human laws and those framed by a divine lawgiver. But we find the fact to be that the imperfection of human nature manifests itself in varying and contradictory interpretations of human and divine laws alike. I shall not deny that it was within the power of God to have so enlightened our understanding that we could have read his message and made no mistake as to its meaning, but that

he has not done so is plain, otherwise all men would agree in their interpretation of what they agree to be the language of his message. For his own wise purposes he has made us what we are.

The facts being as we find them, and assuming that God has made a revelation of his will, and has prescribed laws to be obeyed, not only by those to whom they were communicated, but by all mankind and by all succeeding generations; that the persons to whom this revelation was made were comparatively few in number, and have long since passed away, it seems a reasonable anticipation, consistent with our conception of the wisdom and justice of God, that he would have made provision for the preservation and safe-keeping of the truths revealed, the interpretation of the revelation, and its dissemination among mankind. It must also be expected that whatever provision was made for the carrying out of these ends shall be sufficient for their accomplishment, and shall not fail of its purpose. As we are now in fact reasoning from effect to cause, there is no presumption in saying that it might reasonably be expected that the Divine Lawgiver would have established, as it were, an agency on earth for the carrying out of these purposes, and that such agency would be furnished with credentials of authority. Such an agency, if it exists, must be conscious of its

agency, and must proclaim its mission. It must, so to speak, hang its sign outside the door, so that those having business with it may know where to apply. It must speak as one having authority, and its utterances must be consistent one with another ; those of to-day must not contradict those of yesterday or those of to-morrow. It must not speak with the voice of a Delphic oracle, but its teachings must be practical and plain as to all the truths which it is necessary for us to know in order to please God.

The fact above noted, that religions differing widely in some of their doctrines may yet agree upon others, has led some well-meaning men to seek refuge from the condition of spiritual anarchy which surrounds them in the idea of a simplified creed, embracing only those points upon which they agree. It is evident that this process of elimination might be carried to the point where only one article of faith would remain. It is extremely doubtful, however, whether even this would secure unity of belief, on account of the difficulty of stating even a single truth in such a manner that men will not differ about it. It would be difficult to conceive of a plainer and more definite statement than this: "This is my body." Just four short, common, everyday words, such as any child might use. There is no question as to what is meant by the first, which forms the subject of the sentence, yet for cen-

turies fierce controversies have raged over the meaning of the last three, forming the predicate.

A recognition of this difficulty has led others to propose the abolition of creeds altogether. This means the abolition of religion for religion implies belief, and a creed is the expression of that belief. If this is the solution of the problem, then revelation has failed of its purpose. If we know nothing concerning God and our relations to him that can be expressed in words, we are no better off than the pagan Athenians, who dedicated an altar to the unknown God; and the position of the agnostic is justified. This is the end to which the theory that revelation needs no interpreter has brought numbers of well-disposed minds who have sought earnestly for truth. It is the end to which the denial of an infallible authority in matters of faith must inevitably lead, if followed to its logical conclusion.

It has been argued that as progress is the law of human existence, religion should progress along with other sciences; that we have outgrown the old creeds, and they are no longer adapted to the conditions of modern society. The first is an inference not warranted by the premises. The laws of nature have not changed. Water still runs down hill as certainly as it did when the armies of Cyrus entered Babylon by changing the course of the Euphrates. The combination of saltpeter, sulphur and charcoal would have

made gunpowder in the days of Alexander as well as it did in the days of Napoleon. We have progressed in our knowledge of nature and nature's laws, and by means of that knowledge have achieved results undreamed of in former ages, but those results have been attained by the application of principles as old as creation. Science cannot pierce the veil which conceals the mysteries of the infinite. We can learn nothing of God, except what he chooses to reveal to us, and without further revelation progress in religion is impossible. The assertion that the old religion is not adapted to modern conditions is an assumption in support of which no proof is offered. Human nature remains unchanged. It is still subject to the same weaknesses, and capable of exhibiting the same virtues. Vice may have assumed new forms, but it is still within the prohibition of the old laws. Such a conception of religion must apply to one founded upon the shifting sands of human opinion, and not upon the enduring rock of Divine Revelation. If the old creeds were ever true, they are still true, for truth is eternal.

That the Creator has made a revelation of his will, that he has established an agency on earth to preserve, interpret and disseminate that revelation, and that this agency exists among us, as a Living Witness to the Truth, are the propositions which I desire to maintain.

CHAPTER V

THE INFALLIBLE AUTHORITY

IT is not my purpose to formulate a creed, or make a profession of faith, further than may be necessary to amplify and make more clear the propositions stated at the end of the preceding chapter. With this end only in view, and avoiding any dogmatic statement not necessary to the purpose, I proceed to state those propositions as follows:

There is one God, in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. That is to say: "He has three personalities, and is at once, according as we view him in one or the other of them, The Father, The Son and The Spirit — a divine three, who bear towards each other the several relations which these names indicate, and are in that respect distinct from each other, and in that respect alone." (Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, p. 124.)

In the beginning of time, God created the Earth and all things therein. In the early ages of the history of the human race, God frequently manifested himself to men, and

spoke directly to them. At other times he spoke through inspired teachers called prophets, and gave to certain men power whereby they performed miracles. At other times he delivered his messages through spiritual beings called angels. These facts are truly related in the collection of inspired writings known as the Old Testament.

In the fullness of time, God the Son assumed human form and nature, being born of a virgin, as the result of miraculous generation. He passed through the usual stages of infancy, childhood and youth, and grew to man's estate. He was named Jesus, and is known in history as Jesus Christ. He united within himself both Divine and Human nature, being possessed of all the power and attributes of God, together with the physical weakness and capacity for suffering, both mental and physical, of a man.

The two dogmas of the three-fold personality of God and the dual nature of Christ are among the mysteries which our intelligence is unable to comprehend, but which, upon sufficient assurance, we accept as true.

After reaching man's estate, our Lord Jesus Christ announced his character and mission, and spent several years in teaching and instructing his disciples, both privately and publicly, attesting his divine character and mis-

sion by the performance of many miracles. When the appointed time had arrived, he was apprehended by the civil authorities upon charges preferred by his enemies, and was put to death by being crucified, and being dead, he was laid in the tomb. On the third day he arose from the dead and appeared again as a living man, eating and drinking with his disciples, and conversing with them, and was seen by many persons. After the lapse of forty days, having given to his disciples his last solemn commands, he ascended into Heaven.

The principal events of our Lord's life upon earth, his death, resurrection and ascension, as well as some of his discourses and instructions, but not all of them, are truly related in the collection of inspired writings known as the New Testament.

In the exercise of his mission upon earth, our Lord Jesus Christ, besides expounding to his disciples the divine truths revealed to mankind in former ages, revealed to them other truths, additional to and supplementing the former revelations. He commanded his disciples to propagate these truths by teaching them to others, and promised that after his departure from earth he would send them the Holy Spirit, who would remain with them forever and guide them to all truth. This promise was not limited to those to whom it was com-

municated, but extended to their successors from generation to generation. Our Lord provided for the organization of this body of teachers, together with those who should believe and follow their teaching, by appointing one of their number to be its head, and conferring upon him certain special powers and enjoining upon him special duties. To the organization thus created, to which he gave the name of his Church, he promised that the powers of evil, or, to use his exact language, "The Gates of Hell," should never prevail against it.

In compliance with his instructions, the disciples, after his ascension, remained together and awaited the coming of the promised guide. A few days thereafter the promise was visibly fulfilled by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon them in the form of tongues of flame. Being thus equipped for the discharge of their mission, the apostles separated and went forth into various parts of the earth, and proclaimed the message with which they were charged. In accordance with the divine promise, and by a duly ordered form of consecration, the power of the Holy Spirit was transmitted from those upon whom it had descended on the day of Pentecost to others, and by them to others, from generation to generation, down to our own day. Peter, who had been appointed chief of the apostles, and head of the newly

organized church, chose as the scene of his labors the City of Rome, then the center of the civil power and undisputed mistress of the world. When Peter had sealed his testimony to the truth of the gospel which he had come to Rome to proclaim, by the sacrifice of his life, the primacy and power of which he had been possessed passed to his successor, and so on in an unbroken line to Pius X, now reigning.

From the day of Pentecost to this day, the apostles and their successors, as an organized visible body, known as the Catholic Church, with Peter and his successors at its head, have continued to proclaim to mankind the divine message, being miraculously preserved from error, preserving unimpaired the original deposit of truth, adding nothing and taking nothing away, teaching everywhere and in all ages the same doctrine without variableness or any shadow of turning.

Such in brief and imperfect outline is the method provided by the Divine Lawgiver for the preservation and transmission to all generations of those truths concerning himself and our relations to him which he wills us to know. Philosophically beautiful in conception, simple in its operation and marvelous in its results, it is in every way worthy of its divine author.

It is hardly necessary to explain why I have said nothing of the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ as Redeemer of mankind from the guilt of sin, or of the priestly office of the church as minister of his grace. These subjects, although of supreme importance, are outside the scope of my purpose.

In speaking of the office of Peter and his successors as head of the church, it is to be understood that this refers to the visible church on earth, Christ himself being the spiritual head.

There are one or two points upon which some further explanation is perhaps necessary. A divinely inspired teacher must necessarily be an infallible teacher, but the prerogative of infallibility does not belong to the individual members of the church, but to the church as a whole. Individual members of the church, even those commissioned by her to teach, may and do sometimes fall into error. When such an unfortunate event occurs, the church promptly exercises her power by calling the offender to account, and if he persists in his error she casts him out of her communion and forbids her children to listen to him. The prerogative of infallibility is exercised by the church in general council of its bishops, whose judgments are confirmed by the Pope, or by the Pope alone, in his character as head of the church. The prerogative of infallibility applies only to such subjects as are within the

proper jurisdiction of the church as guardian of faith and morals. Upon other branches of knowledge she claims no authority and pronounces no infallible judgment, so long as they do not affect those subjects. It is not every utterance of the Pope, even upon subjects within the jurisdiction of the church, that has the character of infallibility. It is only when he pronounces a solemn judgment in his official capacity, as head of the church and Vicar of Christ on earth, that the Holy Spirit guides him to a correct judgment free from the possibility of error.

There is a certain analogy between the action of the church in her judicial character and that of a court of last resort in human law. When the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, for example, in his private character, expresses an opinion upon a question of law, it is entitled to such consideration as may be due to his learning and high standing as a lawyer, but no more. It binds no one, and is not conclusive of the question. But when he ascends the bench, and, as the organ of the court, pronounces judgment upon a case regularly brought before it, such judgment establishes a precedent by which all future cases involving the same question of law are to be decided, and all inferior courts and officers of government are bound to respect and follow the law as thus declared. The analogy is not perfect, because the

judges of the civil court are not infallible, and sometimes reach the conclusion that their former decisions were erroneous, and in later cases decide the law to be otherwise than as formerly declared. On the other hand, the divinely constituted and guided tribunal can never err in its judgments, and can never reverse, modify or in anywise alter them.

There is a further analogy. The Supreme Court can make no new laws, but only interprets and declares the existing law, and must decide each case coming before it in accordance with the statutes enacted by the legislative authority, or in the absence of express statutory provision upon the subject in hand, by that body of principles and precedents known as the common, or unwritten, law. In like manner, the church in her judicial character makes no new laws, but applies to new questions, as they arise, those laws which, in the beginning, were committed to her by the Divine Lawgiver for the government of mankind in all future time. Here again the analogy is imperfect, because it is not to be expected that the foresight of human lawmakers will enable them to provide for every possible contingency which may arise, and questions may come before the civil court in which there is neither statute nor precedent to control the decision, whereas the Divine Lawgiver must have foreseen every question that would ever need to

be determined. The analogy is, however, sufficiently close to illustrate and explain what some have supposed to be the promulgation by the church of new doctrines, or articles of faith. When the Supreme Court decides that the Constitution gave Congress the power to regulate telegraph lines engaged in the transmission of messages from one State to another, it added nothing to the Constitution. The framers of that fundamental grant of power had never heard of a telegraph line, and made no mention of them, but they did give to Congress the power to regulate commerce between the States. The court decided that the exchange of telegraph messages was commerce, and hence that Congress had the power to regulate it. The court, in effect, decided that Congress had always possessed the power to regulate telegraph lines doing an interstate business. The power existed before telegraph lines existed. It was not until the time came for its exercise that any question was raised as to the existence of the power, and until the question was raised there was no occasion for the court to decide it.

In somewhat the same manner the church exercises her judicial power in matters of faith. She does not act hastily, or concern herself with every idle speculation, but when an erroneous opinion is being propagated, upon a point which has not been previously expressly decided, and

the matter has assumed such importance as to require action, she pronounces her judgment. As the condemnation of error includes a declaration that the opposite is true, her declarations of the truth usually take a negative form by condemning the contrary proposition. These declarations are not additions to the faith, but simply authoritative declarations as to what the faith has always been.

In saying that the church makes no laws, I have reference to her character as guardian and interpreter of the faith. In her character as shepherd of the flock committed to her charge, she makes such disciplinary regulations as may be needful, such as the observance of fasts, etc. These regulations, which she makes herself, she may alter or suspend as she sees fit, and may make them of universal application, or limit them to particular countries or classes of persons.

Infallibility does not mean impeccability. Our Lord promised to preserve his disciples and their successors from error in their teaching, but did not promise to preserve them from sin. It is possible for a pope to be a great sinner, and yet render infallible judgments on matters of faith.

No one who admits the omnipotent power of God will deny the possibility of such an agency as that above described. That its successful operation is inconsistent with the fallible human nature of the instruments employed is not an

objection, for the plan itself presupposes a continuing miracle. Will anyone who believes in the inspiration of the Epistles of St. Paul deny that the same Holy Spirit which guided the pen of St. Paul can also guide the pen of Pius X? Has the power which filled the mouths of the unlettered fishermen of Galilee with words of divine wisdom ceased to exist?

That an institution, claiming to be such an agency and proclaiming such a mission, exists among us to-day, is a visible fact. Its sign hangs upon the door for all the world to read.

CHAPTER VI

THE TESTIMONY OF HISTORY

I HAVE heretofore stated the sense in which I use the words "Evidence," "Testimony" and "Proof," as being that which tends to produce belief as to the truth of the matter under consideration. In like manner, I use the word "History" as including all sources of authentic information concerning past occurrences.

Jesus Christ is easily the most imposing figure in human history. His shadow falls across its every page. Whether their inspiration be admitted or not, the Jewish Scriptures are documents of unquestioned antiquity. The earliest pagan writings, the results of archæological research, and everything else which has come down to us from the early ages, all tend to confirm their historical accuracy. It is at least certain that, as far back as their history can be traced, the Jews were a peculiar people, believing themselves to be in a special manner set apart and separated from the rest of mankind, and under the direct government and guidance of God. They believed that one of their race was to be-

come a great conqueror, and lead them to the empire of the earth. The ancient prophecies pointed, with more or less certainty, to the time of his appearance, and when they had lost their national individuality and fallen under the sway of the Roman conquerors, they consoled themselves with the thought that the coming of their deliverer was near at hand. The existence of this belief on their part is attested by the Roman historians. The prophecies themselves have come down to us. There is no doubt of their antiquity, and they foretell his coming in unmistakable language.

Leaving out of view the gospel narratives, we are able to learn from Jewish and Roman writers that Jesus was of the Jewish race. That he was a teacher, and reputed to be a worker of miracles. That he was believed by his disciples to be the promised deliverer, and thus received the name of Christ, *i. e.*, the Anointed, or Messiah. That after his death he was reported to have risen again from the dead. That he was the founder of a new sect, called after his name, Christians. That so far from being discouraged by his death, his disciples manifested the greatest zeal in propagating the new faith. That in a short time it gained adherents by thousands, and spread into all the surrounding countries, and even gained a foothold in the imperial city itself. That the followers of this new faith were so

convinced of its truth that no amount of punishment, torture, and even death itself, could induce them to relinquish it.

Consider the circumstances of the time when Christ appeared. The Latin community upon the banks of the Tiber had established itself as the undisputed ruler of the world then known to it. The great Oriental monarchies, the Assyrian and the Persian and the great empire founded by Alexander upon their ruins, had passed away, and their territories and people owned the rule of Cæsar. Egypt, that land of mystery, had become a Roman province. The learning and art of Ancient Greece existed only as a trophy of the conqueror. The Jewish theocracy no longer governed the chosen people. Its priesthood practiced their sacred rites only by the sufferance of the petty satraps who ruled the ancient kingdom of David and Solomon as the legates of Rome. The haughty Roman regarded the Jew and his religion with unconcealed contempt. The God of the Hebrews was to him only one of the innumerable deities worshiped by the many peoples who composed his mighty dominion. The internecine struggle which attended the downfall of the republic and the establishment of the empire had come to an end, and, for the first time perhaps in its history, the world was at peace. A new epoch had opened, and the stage seemed fitly set for the occurrence of a great event.

Consider the circumstances of the life of Christ, the man. He was of humble origin, and passed his life in comparative obscurity. He did none of those great things for which men are remembered. He led no armies, and swayed no senates by his eloquence. He wrote no books, painted no pictures, and wrought no sculpture. The great ones of the earth never heard of him until after he had passed away. His own people rejected him, because he promised to them none of those things which they expected from the looked-for deliverer, the restoration of their nation, victory over their enemies, and earthly dominion. Yet, before the generation which saw him in the flesh had passed away, his name was held in reverence by unnumbered thousands in distant lands, to whom the God of the Hebrews had been unknown.

When the new gospel was first preached in the capitol the Romans looked upon it as only an extreme and fanatical form of the despised Jewish religion, but as it grew and gained adherents among their own ranks, their attitude changed from contempt to suspicion and alarm. The whole force of the mighty power which had reduced the kingdoms of the earth to the rank of Roman provinces was exercised to suppress it, without success. The prisons were filled with its followers. The circus arenas ran red with their blood. They were destroyed by wild beasts

in the presence of assembled thousands. They were nailed to crosses, saturated with pitch and burned in public places. All these measures availed nothing. Such was the faith of the Christian converts that they counted life itself as nothing compared with the new-found truth. Their zeal, constancy and undying faith impressed the beholders with the truth of their cause. The result has been crystallized into proverb: "The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church." Despite the fierce persecutions of the first three centuries, the new religion continued to grow, and before three hundred years had passed from the day of Pentecost it captured the citadel of the civil power. The Emperor himself became a Christian. The erstwhile symbol of degradation, the cross of the despised Nazarene, became the battle standard of the Roman legions. The first stage in the fulfillment of the Jewish prophecies had been accomplished: The son of David had come into his own.

These facts are as well attested as anything in history. Let us consider their full significance. Here we have a handful of obscure and ignorant men, belonging to a despised race in an out of the way corner of the empire, starting out to proclaim a new philosophy of life. Preaching a new and strange doctrine, wholly antagonistic to the principles upon which the existing society was based, a society whose achievements in men-

tal philosophy, literature and art have not been surpassed in our own day. Preaching self-denial and chastity to a society given over to luxury and licentiousness. Preaching the sacredness of marriage to a society in which the husband divorced his wife at will. Preaching the sacredness of human life to a society wherein the life of the slave in the eyes of his master, and that of the master in the eyes of his sovereign, was of no more account than that of an ox or a sheep. How vain and hopeless would have been their task had not a supernatural power supported them and assured their victory. How impossible it is to account for their success by any other means, is shown by the utter insufficiency of all the reasons by which skeptics have attempted to account for it.

In her character as a watchful guardian of the truth, the Church has but recently placed the seal of condemnation upon an insidious and dangerous form of attack upon Christianity, known as Modernism. Self-styled critics, wise in their own conceit, have assumed to dissect the gospel narratives, and reject parts as false and accept parts as true. Eliminating those portions which prove his divinity, they profess great admiration for Christ the man, the sublime beauty of his moral teaching and the transcendent virtue of his character. Calling themselves Christians, yet denying his divine character, they hold him

up as the perfect example of humanity, and his system of ethics as the perfection of human wisdom.

The divinity of Christ is the cornerstone of Christianity, and nothing but his continued presence and inspiration can account for its marvelous success. Will any student of human nature believe that moral sentiments, however sublime, nerved the apostles and their converts to endure persecution and death, or that admiration for his perfect human character conquered the Roman empire for Christ? Is such a conclusion more probable than the occurrence of a miracle?

Let us apply to the gospel narratives a test of a different character. It is an established principle of jurisprudence that the best test of the credibility of a witness is his manner of testifying and the consistency of his statements. It is universally held that the members of a jury, who have seen the witness on the stand and noted his manner, the expression of his countenance and the inflections of his voice, while delivering his testimony, are better judges of his credibility than the more experienced appellate judges who read the written record of his testimony. There can be no doubt that Peter and his associates told their prospective converts the same story which some of them afterwards committed to writing, with innumerable details and circumstances not

mentioned in the brief written narratives. It is not unreasonable to suppose that something like a cross-examination frequently took place. Incredulous or curious hearers would ask questions upon certain points which occurred to them. The verdict of those jurors who heard the oral testimony of the eyewitnesses is written in history.

Peter and his associates were in a position to know the truth, and they attested their faith in the divinity of Christ with their lives. All but one of the original disciples died the death of a martyr.

The resurrection of Christ from the dead is the touchstone by which the truth or falsity of Christianity is to be tested. St. Paul says: "If Christ be not risen from the dead, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is vain also." But the converse of the proposition is also true. If he was dead and rose from the grave a living man, then we are bound to say, with the Roman centurion at Calvary: "Indeed this man was the son of God." And it follows that the religion he taught is of divine origin.

Let me not be misunderstood. The truth of the Christian religion depends upon the fact of the resurrection, but not upon the sufficiency of the evidence to prove it. The sufficiency of all evidence depends upon the mental attitude of those to whom it is addressed.

If Christ did not rise from the dead, Peter and his associates invented the story of his resurrection. They could not have been deceived. They distinctly tell us that they saw him and talked with him, not once, but many times, and that, in their presence, Thomas, the doubter, examined the hands of their risen master, and saw the print of the nails therein, and put his hands into the wound in his side. Does our knowledge of human nature teach us that it is more probable that these eleven men conspired together to propagate a falsehood, and all adhered to it at the cost of their lives, than that a miracle occurred?

The conversion of the Emperor Constantine, in the year 313, is one of the landmarks of history. Upon that day Christianity became and has ever since been the controlling force of civilization. When the Roman empire went down under the barbarian invasions, Christianity survived it, and in turn conquered the invaders. Slowly but surely it civilized the barbarians who had overwhelmed the empire and established its own empire over their hearts. Whatever remains to us of the Greek and Roman civilizations was preserved by Christianity. During the long centuries following the fall of the empire — those centuries which are known as the dark ages — the Christian monasteries were the centers where learning was preserved, and from which

it was gradually diffused over a darkened world.

The Christianity that gained these triumphs was that of which the successors of St. Peter were the visible head and the center of unity. Through all the mutations of time, the shifting of the seats of empire, the migrations of races and the rise and fall of nations, the church that was organized in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost has survived unchanged and unchangeable. It has seen its vicissitudes, and time after time its enemies have thought its end at hand, but even the storm that threatened its destruction has passed away and left its foundations as firm as ever. From time to time, pride of opinion and impatience of authority have led to heresy and schism, and great bodies of its followers have separated themselves from it, but no sooner have they done so than they have lost that mysterious power which has won for Christianity its victories. No body of Christians, who have separated themselves from the center of unity, have continued to retain that vital force and power of growth which the Catholic church has manifested from the beginning, and still preserves in undiminished vigor. In western Asia and northern Africa there still exist small bodies of Christians, separated from the Catholic communion as the result of the heresies of the early centuries. They belong to nonprogressive

racess, and their existence proves but little to the point either way. The same is true as to the great Greek schism of the eleventh century. The line of division there was racial and national, but however the fact may be accounted for, it remains true that all these bodies have stood still and made no progress since their separation from the mother church. Although surrounded by and in direct contact with non-Christian peoples, they have but barely held their own, and have made no conquests. The so-called Reformation of the sixteenth century separated from the church a large section of the flower of her children, races and nations as intellectual and progressive as any the earth has ever known, but the same result has followed. They have progressed in other directions as no people have ever done before, but Christianity among them has lost ground rather than gained.

From these facts we reach the conclusion that the vital principle of Christianity is that Holy Spirit which descended upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost, and was transmitted by them to their successors, through the sacrament of Holy Orders, and inures to the church unity of faith and freedom from error, as well as the due administration of the sacraments, which are the channels of God's grace to the penitent sinner.

There is probably not a single statement of

fact in this chapter which has not been denied by some writer. None have been denied with more vehemence than the statement that the church has never varied in her teaching. Her enemies have realized its importance. If she has ever contradicted herself, her claim to infallibility is gone, and her character as a witness to the truth is destroyed. False witnesses appeared at the trial of Christ, accusing him of saying that which he had not said. His church has not been spared similar calumnies. Her record is open to examination. Let the impartial seeker after truth study it for himself, and form his own conclusion.

The laws of human nature forbid that an organization composed of weak and fallible men, prone to error and difference of opinion, and by nature impatient of authority, should, without supernatural assistance, exist for ages, preserving unimpaired the same original deposit of faith, proclaiming century after century, through all the mutations of time, to every race and in every tongue, the same message. But it is also true that this organization, composed of such men, has done this wonderful thing.

Those are the premises. The first established by the universal experience of mankind. The second written in indelible letters on the pages of history. What conclusion follows?

CHAPTER VII

THE TESTIMONY OF PHILOSOPHY

IT has been said that the expectation of a revelation from God has led men to fancy that one has been made. This saying is an admission that men do expect a revelation. Whence comes this expectation? Is it not a part of that consciousness of the existence of God, and of our responsibility to and dependence upon him which is implanted in the hearts of all mankind? Those who deny that a revelation has been made offer no proof of its impossibility, and, in the nature of things, no such proof can be made. As we have seen, the only knowledge of God that we can have, aside from revelation, is that given by conscience. We may infer his existence from the evidence of order and design manifest in creation, but this leads to no definite conclusion concerning him. There is no hope that human science can ever learn anything of him, for science has to do with created things. It follows that without a revelation we have and can have no knowledge of God, except that given by conscience, and conscience leads us to expect

a revelation. So far, then, as the evidence goes, it is in favor of the existence of a revelation. I have heretofore said that there is no antecedent probability that miracles will not occur. The only argument against the occurrence of miracles is that drawn from experience, viz., that so far as our personal observation has extended, the laws of nature are invariable. To admit the possible existence of a God by whom all things were created, and by whom the laws of nature were established, is to admit the possibility that he may, at his pleasure, suspend or reverse the operation of these laws. How can we undertake to say that he has never suspended them, or when and under what circumstances he may suspend them? It follows that to say that the occurrence of miracles, or a revelation from God to man, is impossible, is a pure assumption, based upon no evidence whatever. To say that they are philosophically impossible is false. A denial that those things have occurred can rest upon no higher ground than a denial of the sufficiency of the evidence of their occurrence. As I have heretofore remarked, the sufficiency of all evidence depends upon the mental attitude of those to whom it is addressed. Some skeptic has said that if God had made a revelation, it should have been written upon the sun. It is doubtful whether, even in that case, there would not have been found those who questioned its

truth. Such is the liberty which, for his own mysterious reasons, the Creator has given us.

The Christian religion is an existing fact, having its roots as far back as we are able to trace the history of the human race. Christianity is itself but the continuation of the old Jewish religion. The two together form but one whole, which must stand or fall together. It is either all true or all false. If this religion is not based upon a divine revelation, it is a stupendous imposture, beginning away back in the dawn of history and continuing down to our own day. The historical evidence in favor of its divine origin is so strong that if the matter is to be determined upon a balance of probabilities alone, the evidence must be received as true. It is more probable that it is true than that all this array of evidence is false. We receive this evidence at second hand, and there is of course a possibility of its being false, but the probability of its truth is greater than that upon which we act in the ordinary affairs of life. The evidence is the best of which the nature of the case is susceptible, which is all that is required by the common law rules of evidence. As said by an eminent writer :

“The knowledge acquired by an individual, through his own perception and reflection, is but a small part of what he possesses ; much of what we are content to regard and act upon as knowl-

edge having been acquired through the perception of others. It is not easy to conceive that the Supreme Being, whose wisdom is so conspicuous in all his works, constituted man to believe only upon his own personal experience, since in that case, the world could neither be governed nor improved; and society must remain in the state in which it was left by the first generation of men. . . . Skeptical philosophers, inconsistently enough with their own principles, yet true to the nature of man, continue to receive a large portion of their knowledge upon testimony derived, not from their own experience, but from that of other men, and this even when it is at variance with much of their own personal observation. Thus the testimony of the historian is received with confidence in regard to the occurrences of ancient times; that of the naturalist and traveler, in regard to the natural history and civil condition of other countries; and that of the astronomer respecting the heavenly bodies; facts, which upon the narrow basis of his own 'firm and unalterable experience,' upon which Mr. Hume so much relies, he would be bound to reject as wholly unworthy of belief." (1 Greenleaf on Evidence, Sections 7-8.)

Truth has a power of its own that is well expressed by the poet's lines:

"Truth, crushed to earth, shall rise again,
The eternal years of God are hers;
But error, wounded, writhes in pain,
And dies among its worshipers."

Truth is always harmony. Every fact fits into and harmonizes with every other fact. Falsehood is a note of discord which must be sooner or later detected. It is the unanimous testimony of those who have had long experience in the administration of justice that no matter how carefully and skillfully a falsehood may be constructed, there is always somewhere a flaw in its armor, somewhere a faulty link in the chain of circumstances, which apparently support it, some place where it should connect with the known truth and does not fit. There is always some circumstance, perhaps trivial and irrelevant, which has been overlooked, and which brings about the downfall of the whole structure, and which patient search and close study will always reveal.

No story was ever subjected to such unsparing scrutiny as that of the gospels. It was first promulgated under the eyes of critics as keen and hostile as those of our own day. The Greek and Roman philosophers were intellectually the peers of the ablest of modern rationalists. Others than Demetrius, the silversmith, had a sordid motive for opposing the new religion. The priests of the pagan temples, the corrupt Jewish priests, and many others, found their power and influence threatened. A thousand jealous eyes were focused upon the scene of the marvellous events said to have occurred

in Judea. If the story had been false, it is inconceivable that the imposture should not have been detected and exposed during the generation which saw its origin. There has never been a time since when hostile critics have not scanned the evidence of its truth. In modern times, every scrap of contemporary writing, every inscription, every oral tradition which might throw the faintest light upon the question, has been patiently studied by those anxious to demonstrate its falsity. If the story were not true, somewhere, somehow, some fact which did not harmonize with it would have been brought to light, and the whole fabric overthrown.

Besides the historical evidence of the truth of the Christian religion, there is other evidence which lies under our own observation, and which we are able to verify for ourselves. When we compare the teachings of Christianity with those elemental standards of right and wrong which exist in our own hearts, and which we call by the name of conscience, we find them to exactly agree. At every point Christianity rings true. More than this, Christianity satisfies those longings and aspirations which are natural to the human heart, and which nothing else can satisfy. It offers the only philosophy of life which enables us to meet every misfortune and bear every pain.

Christianity is so interwoven into the struc-

ture of our society that those who attack it do not realize what a condition of chaos would result were it destroyed. Would you know what human society would be without Christianity? Study the social condition of Rome in the reign of Nero, when the pagan civilization had reached its highest point. Look around you at those people who live nearest the Christian ideal, and at those who live farthest from it. Imagine a society composed entirely of one or the other class. Which would you prefer to live in? The most confirmed skeptic, if he be honest and truthful, must admit that Christianity makes the world a better and happier place to live in. Grapes do not grow upon thorns or figs upon thistles. That innate perception of the proper relation of things which we call common sense revolts at the idea of such a system being the product of falsehood and imposture.

So far, then, as we have any means of testing them, the teachings of Christianity are absolutely true. So far they attest the credibility of the witness upon whose testimony we receive them. That is to say: Leaving out of view the miraculous occurrences which history records as attesting the divine origin of the message and the commission of the messenger, that part of the message which we have the means of testing appears to be true, and to that extent is a warranty of that part which relates to things be-

yond our knowledge, and which we must accept, if at all, upon the testimony of the messenger.

We have now reached the proposition to which all that I have written has pointed, viz.:

The Church of Christ is a continuing and visible miracle, and by her existence and character attests the truth of her message to mankind.

I have said in a former chapter that it is reasonable to expect that if the Creator has made a revelation of himself and his will, he will, in some sufficient manner, have authenticated his message, and furnished his messenger with credentials of authority, and that the form of attestation will vary with the circumstances of the time, the nature of the message, and the persons to whom it is addressed.

Accordingly we find the fact to be that in the early history of the race, God appeared visibly to men and spoke directly to them. At other times he sent angels—beings of supernatural character—to convey his messages. Again he spoke by Prophets, whose authority was attested by occurrences of miraculous character, and by their ability to foretell future events. When God the Son appeared in human form, he attested his divinity by the performance of many miracles, and especially by the supreme miracle of his resurrection from the dead. After his de-

parture from earth, his apostles in many instances performed miracles. For the generation which saw the foundation of Christianity these miracles were a sufficient warranty of its truth, and during many succeeding generations the memory of these great events remained in the minds of men. The faith of those who received the Gospel from the first Apostles was deep and strong, and they transmitted a like faith to their children. We may imagine that oral tradition preserved among the faithful for many generations, innumerable details as to the life of our Lord, and the great events of his ministry and the foundation of his church, which are entirely lost to us. In those early days, while the miraculous events which attended her birth were yet fresh in men's minds, the supernatural character of the church was not so apparent as it is to us, nor was the perception of that supernatural character so necessary to attest to the world her divine commission. Looking back as we do upon these events through the mists of nineteen centuries, we see them only by the faint light of history, and they have lost that sharpness of outline and wealth of detail with which the people of the first centuries saw them. To us they are merely history. To them they were actual scenes enacted almost under their own eyes and witnessed by their immediate progenitors. On the other hand, as the colors of the

historical picture fade with the passage of time, the supernatural character of that witness who saw those events, and yet remains among us to relate them, stands out more clearly with each passing century.

This is the proper place to quote the celebrated passage from Macaulay on the perpetuity of the Church, but I refrain. The brilliant English essayist assumed that the church was of human origin, and was unable to account for its continued existence. Many others have made the same attempt and failed.

Here we have an organization founded while Tiberius Cæsar sat upon the imperial throne, which spans by its life all the ages between, and still exists in the twentieth century as young and vigorous as ever. A corporation organized in Jerusalem two thousand years ago, transacting its business here in America to-day as successfully, and as much at home, as the Western Union Telegraph Company. An organization which has adapted itself to every condition of society, from barbarism to the highest civilization, to every form of government from absolute monarchy to a democratic republic, and yet remains itself unchanged in any essential feature. In a world where all human institutions have their period of growth, their period of life and their period of decay, it alone is endowed with

perpetual youth; immortal among the mortals; unchangeable in a world of change.

This quality of unchangeableness in the church is more marvellous than its perpetuity. The very arguments by which her enemies seek to impeach her supernatural character tend to prove it. They say some popes have been men of bad character, wicked, worldly, avaricious and zealous for their personal advantage rather than the interest of religion; that their private lives have been scandalous and their public conduct inconsistent with the exalted character of Vicar of Christ. Granting all this to be true, is it not a proof of supernatural influence that not one of these weak and erring men has ever yielded a single point of the faith which was committed to their charge? Great pressure has been brought to bear upon them. More than once it has appeared to human eyes as if their "obstinacy" and "intransigence" (to use a word lately much in vogue), threatened the destruction of the church itself. But no prospect of worldly advantage to worldly minded popes, no threat of disaster to weak and timid popes, has availed when there has been question of preserving unimpaired the original deposit of truth.

One of the characteristics of truth is the eternal enmity between it and falsehood. All

that is evil in the world is the foe of the church, and all its forces are arrayed to compass her destruction. In all ages she has been a shining mark for the envenomed shafts of the liar. In the days of Nero she was accused of sacrificing living children upon her altars. It is not so long ago that it was popularly believed in our own country that she maintained a regular scale of prices for permits to commit sin. Even yet, many otherwise well informed persons believe her to be so thoroughly corrupt that when a Catholic lives a decent and virtuous life, it is in spite of his religion, and not because of it. The soldiers in the trenches, the men on the firing line in the battle against sin — her priests, who have given up family ties, the opportunity of fortune, and all that life offers to the ambitious, to lead lives of hardship and toil, and often of actual privation in the service of God, are accused by lying tongues of spending their lives in indolence and debauchery. The foul tongue of the slanderer has not spared even the noble women who give their lives to the service of God and humanity in her religious communities. Does not falsehood, by this unrelenting war upon the church, prove her to be its mortal enemy, and thus vindicate her claim to truth?

The charities of the church are the admiration of the world. There is no form of human suffering for which she has not made special pro-

vision. Her hospitals, her orphan asylums, her homes for the aged, etc., are carried on by men and women whose services are rendered for the only consideration that insures perfect service — the love of God. Such fruits as these do not grow upon a tree whose roots are planted in falsehood and imposture.

Nothing connected with the church has been more bitterly assailed than the Sacrament of Penance — the Confessional, and nothing more clearly attests both her holiness and her supernatural character. Look around at the Catholics of your acquaintance, and you will find that those who lead the purest and most upright lives are those who are most frequent in their attendance at the confessional. Whenever you find a Catholic leading a bad life, you will find that he has given up the practice of confession, and the progress of his departure from virtue may be traced on parallel lines with his abandonment of the sacraments. The supernatural influence in this sacrament is shown by the fact that no priest was ever known to betray a secret heard in the confessional. Priests are but human, and some of them have been men of bad character. Priests have lost their faith and sunk to the lowest depths of degradation. Priests have renounced their religion and publicly calumniated the church; they have even written books and lectured on the "horrors of

the confessional," but not one of them has ever revealed what he heard there. This statement will, of course, be denied, and the contrary has been a favorite theme for fanciful romancers; but no authenticated case can be produced where a real priest has betrayed the secrets of the confessional. This is so contrary to all our experience of human nature that it is an absolute proof of supernatural influence.

To sum up the argument: The Christian religion and the Catholic Church are inseparable. They must stand or fall together. Their existence is a fact which can only be accounted for in one of two ways. Either they are of human origin, created and sustained by falsehood and imposture, or they are of divine origin, and are sustained and preserved by supernatural power.

The history and character of the church are wholly inconsistent with the theory of its human origin. On such an extended field as is here in question, the laws of human nature are as certain and invariable in their operation as those which govern the material world. Our knowledge of those laws forbids us to believe that such an institution could have been established by human devices upon a false foundation, and have survived the vicissitudes of two thousand years, and yet stand unchanged and impregnable.

On the other hand, the history and character of the church are entirely consistent with her

claim to divine origin and preservation. There is no philosophical objection to the truth of such a claim. On the contrary, so far as we, in our natural ignorance of the character and designs of the Creator, are warranted in speculating upon the manner in which he will carry out those designs, it seems reasonable and fitting that he should have created and maintained such an agency to inform us of that which he wishes us to know concerning himself and his will.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE

IF my little essay shall be so fortunate as to find any readers among persons who have been trained in the Protestant tradition that the Bible is the beginning and end of our knowledge of God, they will probably think it strange that I should have undertaken to argue in favor of the truth of Christianity without saying more of the Bible. To me such a course of proceeding seems entirely logical, and in accordance with the rules of evidence. The Bible is an ancient document, but before it is accepted as evidence its custody must be accounted for. The Bible was not sent down from Heaven as a complete whole, like the tables of the law delivered to Moses upon Mount Sinai. It comes from the custody of the Catholic Church. She is the witness to its authenticity. If her testimony is not credible, the authenticity of the Bible is not proven. If her character as a faithful custodian is not above reproach, suspicion is cast upon the document.

The Protestant arguing with an unbeliever is in the position of a party in court who impeaches

his own witness. He produces the Bible and says: "Here is the inspired word of God. It contains all the truth necessary to salvation. Nothing is to be believed concerning God and his will except what is therein contained." His opponent examines the book, and finds it to consist of a collection of some seventy documents, none of which are dated, and to many of which no authors' names are affixed. He carefully examines it page by page, and finds nowhere any reference to the book as a complete whole, or any statement that it is the sole rule of faith. He asks: "This is not one book, but many. How do you know that they are equally to be received as the word of God? They appear from internal evidence to have been written at different times, through a period of many centuries. Who collected these various documents into one whole, and who certifies to their inspired character? There are many things in this book that are hard to be understood. How shall I ascertain the right meaning?" The Protestant, if a truthful man, must answer: "I receive this book upon the authority of the Catholic Church. She collected the various documents of which it is composed. There were many other purported gospels and epistles in circulation in the early days of Christianity. She selected these and declared them to be true, and rejected the others as spurious." "But," says

his opponent, "I find that many of these documents do not contain any statement that they are inspired. How did the Catholic Church ascertain their inspired character? What authority had this church to select these as true and reject the others as false?" The Protestant can only answer: "She claimed to have acted under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit herself, so that she could make no mistake in the matter. She claimed and still claims to be the authorized interpreter of this book, but her claims are false, and her pretended authority is a usurpation. She, somehow, happened to be right in her judgment as to the authenticity and inspiration of the Bible, but she is wholly wrong in her interpretation of it, and her pretended infallibility is a human invention."

Now, the facts are that the Jewish Scriptures — the Old Testament — were all in existence long before the birth of our Lord, and both he and his disciples constantly referred to and quoted from them. When they speak of the Scriptures they refer to the Old Testament. The church was in existence and in the active discharge of her mission before a line of the New Testament was written. She was preaching the gospel, delivered to her orally by her divine founder, and administering the sacraments which he had ordained for the channels of his grace, before the first of the evangelists

put pen to paper. According to tradition, the Gospels were written in the following order: That of St. Matthew about six years after our Lord's ascension; that of St. Mark about ten years; that of St. Luke about twenty-four years, and that of St. John about sixty-three years after the ascension. Before the last mentioned date churches had been established all over northern Africa, western Asia and southern Europe. The great persecution under Nero had occurred, and many thousands had died martyrs to the faith. It was not until near the close of the fourth century, after the conversion of Constantine, that the church established the canon of scripture — that is, the list of books to be regarded as inspired.

The church has always held the Bible in reverence, and no Protestant has ever insisted more firmly than she upon its inspired and sacred character. She stands to-day almost alone as its defender against the attacks of the so-called higher criticism. The Gospels and Epistles which compose the New Testament are the work of her first Bishops and their disciples.

"She saw them written. She took them from the hands of her own Holy Fathers. She treasured and defended them. She transmits them to her children of the latest generation. She is the witness to their inspiration. She alone can give the key to their meaning, and she, to whom

the complete revelation was given in the beginning, knows just how much of the faith committed to her keeping has been transcribed into their blessed pages." (Invitation Heeded, p. 148.)

While the church encourages the reading of the Bible by the laity, she does not allow it to usurp her place as the teacher of religion, and reserves to herself the right to interpret its meaning, bearing in mind what was said by her first Bishop of the Epistles of St. Paul:

"In which are certain things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own destruction." (2 Peter, III; 16.)

The Bible does not purport to be a complete statement of the Christian faith, nor do the gospels purport to contain all the truths delivered by our Lord to his disciples. On the contrary, St. John says:

"But there are also many other things which Jesus did; which, if they were written every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written." (John, XXI; 25.)

When the so-called reformers of the sixteenth century rejected the authority of the

teaching church, all that was left to them of Christianity was the Bible, and they took refuge in a doctrine for which no foundation is found in the Bible itself. There is not a word in the Bible to indicate that it was intended to take the place of the church as the teacher of truth. This notion was an invention of the reformers, born of necessity, in consequence of their revolt against the authority of the church. It may readily be conceived that such a theory would have received scant acceptance before the invention of printing. Imagine St. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, addressing the thousands who asked: "What shall we do, men and brethren?" and saying to them: "Wait until the Bible is published, and each of you get a copy and read it, and you will find therein all that you need to know."

The Protestant theory of religion is not only unphilosophical and illogical, but it stands alone among all the religious systems of the world. In striking contrast to the Jewish religion, which Protestants believe to have been of divine origin, it rejects all idea of prophet or priest, altar or sacrifice, and leaves the believer alone in the world with nothing but a lifeless book, which he cannot understand, and no one to explain it to him. The experiment has had a fair trial. It was not made until the invention of printing and the diffusion of learning had made the cheap and

rapid multiplication of the book and its general reading possible. It was made among the most intellectual and progressive peoples of the earth, in whose hearts the great truths of Christianity were already firmly implanted. Its complete failure is manifest in the condition of religious anarchy to which those same peoples are reduced to-day.

What our Lord said to the unbelieving Jews of his day, referring to the Old Testament, the church may say to the Protestants of our day, referring to the new :

“ Search the scriptures, for you think in them to have life everlasting; and the same are they that give testimony of me.” (John V ; 39.)

Our Lord here referred his hearers to the prophecies of the Jewish scriptures which foretold his coming. In like manner, the church may refer those outside her communion to those passages of the New Testament which record her foundation and the conferring of her commission.

“ And Jesus came into the quarters of Cesarea Philippi: and he asked his disciples, saying: Whom do men say that the Son of man is? But they said: Some John the Baptist, and other some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets. Jesus saith to them:

But whom do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered and said: Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answering, said to him: Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt., XVI; 13-18.)

Pretermittin any discussion of the disputed question, whether the "rock" referred to was Peter himself, or the faith he had just professed, we have here a distinct assertion by our Lord that he would build a church, and that the gates of hell should not prevail against it. Private interpretation substitutes the profession of faith as the rock, instead of Peter, but that is as far as it can go. It cannot explain away the promise itself. The words are too plain, even for Protestant ingenuity. "I will build my church." These were the words of the Living God. Who that believes in the divinity of Christ can doubt that the promise was fulfilled, and the church built? It must still exist. If it does not, the powers of evil have prevailed against it and destroyed it. But the promise of its perpetuity was as plain as the promise of its foundation. "The gates of hell shall not pre-

vail against it." Where is that church to-day? It is impossible that the many antagonistic bodies of Christians in the world, taken collectively, are the church established by Christ. Under no construction of the word "church" can they be considered as one body. The church of Christ must teach the truth. No matter what the truth may be, it is certain these bodies do not all teach it, because their teachings contradict each other, and the truth can never contradict itself.

Historically, there can be no doubt that the Catholic Church is the only organization now in existence which traces its origin back to the days of the apostles. The schismatic churches of the East admit her to be their mother. None of the various Protestant bodies can trace their origin further back than the sixteenth century. Some of them indeed admit that the Catholic Church of the first centuries was the true church of Christ, but claim that she became corrupt and fell into error. If this is true, then the gates of hell prevailed against her, and the promise of her divine founder was not kept.

The Catholic Church is the only organization which claims those powers which were promised by our Lord to his church. It will not be questioned that the disciples, who were chosen by our Lord himself, and to whom he committed his doctrines, were the first members of his church, and the ministers whom he commis-

sioned to preach his gospel. Upon the eve of his ascension into Heaven, in that solemn hour when they looked upon him for the last time with mortal eyes, he said to them:

“All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.” (Matt., XXVIII; 18-29.)

“Go ye into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned.” (Mark, XVI; 15-16.)

“Then he opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures. And he said to them: Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead the third day: And that penance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. And I send the promise of my Father upon you: but stay you in the city, till you be endued with power from on high.” (Luke, XXIV; 45-49.)

“It is not for you to know the times or moments which the Father hath put in his own power: But you shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts, I; 7-8.)

Previously, on the eve of his suffering, he had said to them:

“These things I have spoken to you, abiding with you. But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you.” (John, XIV; 25-26.) “I have yet many things to say to you: but you cannot bear them now. But when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will teach you all truth.” (John, XVI; 12-13.)

The fulfillment of the promise of the Holy Spirit is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, written by St. Luke:

“And when the days of the Pentecost were accomplished, they were all together in one place: And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

And there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them: And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak." (Acts, II; 1-4.)

To whom was the command to preach addressed, and to whom the promise of the Holy Spirit? He promised to be with them even to the consummation of the world, but when the last of those who heard the words from his lips had passed away, the consummation of the world was yet far distant. It was physically impossible that these eleven men, in the short span of their mortal lives, should preach the gospel to all nations in the uttermost parts of the earth. Our Lord did not command or expect impossibilities. We are not warranted in putting such a construction upon his words. It is rather our duty to put such a construction upon them as makes both the command and the promise possible of fulfillment, viz., that they were addressed not only to those who heard the words, but to their successors also, from generation to generation; in other words, to that church of which they were the first members.

St. Paul shows how the truths of the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit were to be

transmitted. Addressing his disciple Timothy, he says:

“Neglect not the grace that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with imposition of the hands of the priesthood.” (1 Tim., IV; 14.)

“I admonish thee, that thou stir up the grace of God which is in thee by the imposition of my hands.” (2 Tim., I; 6.)

“Hold the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me in faith, and in the love which is in Christ Jesus. Keep the good thing committed to thy trust by the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in us.” (2 Tim., I; 13-14.)

“And the things which thou hast heard of me by many witnesses, the same commend to faithful men, who shall be fit to teach others also.” (2 Tim., II; 2.)

Again, in his Epistle to Titus, he says:

“For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and shouldst ordain priests in every city, as I also appointed thee.” (Tit., I; 5.)

Here we have a clear and unmistakable reference to the Sacrament of Holy Orders, just as it is administered in the church to-day, by which the Holy Spirit, which descended upon the

apostles on the day of Pentecost, is transmitted to their successors from generation to generation. As it visibly descended upon the apostles in the form of tongues of flame, so it is transmitted by an outward and visible act, viz., the imposition of hands.

The reformers, in order to justify their revolt against the authority of the church, were obliged to explain away this testimony of the scriptures. In order to do this, they adopted the only course open to them, and placed a construction upon it which would never have occurred to any person not seeking a loophole of escape from an untenable position, viz.: That the promise of the Holy Ghost, the guide to truth, was made only to the immediate disciples of our Lord. This is only one of the inconsistencies resulting from the false position in which they had placed themselves. Every commandment, every word of warning and exhortation, uttered by our Lord to his disciples, and recorded in the gospels, is taken by Protestants as addressed to all mankind, save and except these promises, which they limit to the lifetime of the apostles themselves.

Nothing is more clearly set forth in the New Testament than the primacy of St. Peter. In the passage from St. Matthew above quoted, our Lord, after the promise of the foundation and perpetuity of the church, still addressing

Peter, whom he had declared to be the rock upon which he would build his church, continued :

“ And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.” (Matt., XVI; 19.)

Again, on the eve of his passion, when he stood already in the shadow of the cross, he said to Peter :

“ Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren.” (Luke, XXII; 31-32.)

St. John relates that on the third appearance of our Lord to his disciples, after his resurrection :

“ Jesus saith to Simon Peter: Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these? He saith to him: Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith to him: Feed my lambs. He saith to him again: Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? He saith to him: Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith to him: Feed my lambs. He said to him the

third time: Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved, because he had said to him the third time: Lovest thou me? And he said to him: Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. He said to him: Feed my sheep." (John XXI; 15-17.)

The passage above quoted from St. Luke must strike the fair-minded reader as being conclusive of the question of Peter's primacy, since to him was given the charge of confirming his brethren. The same appears in the passage quoted from St. John, where he is told to feed the master's sheep. To whom is this charge given, but to the shepherd of the flock?

The fact of Peter's primacy stands out clearly in the first record of the infant church, the Acts of the Apostles. In the first recorded meeting of the disciples after the ascension, it was Peter who took the lead and proposed the election of a successor to the apostate Judas. (Acts, I; 15-22.) It was Peter who first preached the new gospel on the day of Pentecost. (Acts, II; 14-36.) It was Peter who performed the first miracle (Acts, III; 1-8), and made it the occasion of another sermon, with wonderful results. (Acts, III; 12-26; IV, 4.) It was Peter who spoke for Christ before the Jewish authorities the next day. (Acts, IV;

8-12.) So on through the entire book of Acts, and yet, in the face of this plain testimony, men claiming to be students and believers of the Bible gravely tell us there is nothing in the sacred volume to show that Peter was given any pre-eminence over the other apostles. The same line of argument which questions the authority of the church because some of her pontiffs have been weak and erring in their private characters, assails the character of Peter, because, in the moment of peril, he manifested his weak human nature by denying his Lord. But it was this same Peter who was made shepherd of the flock, and fulfilled his trust by dying for his sheep, as had been foretold by his master. (John, XXI; 18-19.)

Consistency is a characteristic of truth, and inconsistency that of error. In nothing is the inconsistency of Protestantism more clearly shown than in its position regarding the scriptures. It begins by rejecting all tradition and declaring that nothing is to be received but scripture, and accepts scripture itself on the authority of tradition. Protestants may deny that they accept the Bible on the authority of the church, although they do in fact so accept it. But upon whatever authority they receive it, it is, after all, but tradition, since the Bible itself proves neither its authenticity nor its inspiration. They are

bound to take somebody's word that this collection of documents has always been regarded as the inspired word of God, and has not been mutilated by copyists. Having received it, they place a strained and artificial construction upon it, which nullifies and makes impossible of fulfillment the solemn promises of God. The Protestant theory leaves absolutely no room for a priesthood or ministry of any kind. If the powers given to the apostles expired with them, and were not transmitted to others, it necessarily follows that when the last of them had passed away, all men were on an equal footing, and no one had authority to teach anyone else. If anyone chose to preach, he did so as a mere volunteer, without commission or authority of any kind. Protestantism, however, does not accept this logical consequence of its own contention. All but a few of the minor sects have some form of ordination by which certain persons are set apart as preachers and teachers. But the command to preach the gospel and the promise of divine guidance are inseparable. Both were addressed at the same time to the same men. "Going therefore, teach ye all nations, . . . and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." Protestant theologians accept the command to preach as addressed to them, but they say those to whom the promise

was made are dead. The Catholic Church, the historical successor of the apostles, alone claims both the command and the promise.

No one is warranted in placing such a construction upon our Lord's words as to make him to do a vain thing. The generations yet unborn were as dear to him as those then in the flesh, and his solicitude for their salvation was equally as great. When he said to St. Peter: "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," he foresaw, with the vision of omniscience, that after Peter had gone to his reward, ages would pass away, during which the need of a center of unity and a visible head to his church would be as great as during Peter's lifetime. When he appointed Peter to be the shepherd of his flock, did he intend the flock to be left unfed and unguarded when Peter's mortal life was ended? When he said to his disciples: "Going therefore, teach ye all nations . . . and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world," he knew as well as we know now that the world would exist for ages after their voices were heard no more. He knew that his presence and "the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon them" would be as necessary to their successors as to them. The Catholic construction, that the commands and the promises spoken to Peter and his associates were addressed likewise to his and their suc-

cessors, makes them consistent and worthy of the wisdom and foresight of their divine author.

It is a familiar principle of law that the construction placed upon a written instrument by the parties to it is to be looked to in order to ascertain their intention. There can be no doubt that the apostles themselves understood what our Lord intended. They had lived with him in familiar intercourse, and had heard all those discourses and instructions of which they have recorded only a few. Their first act after his ascension was to elect a successor to the traitor Judas. Every page of the Book of Acts shows that they had no thought that the ministry of the gospel was to be confined to themselves alone, or to cease after their deaths. The history of the early church shows that the apostles and their immediate successors understood the command to teach, and the promise of continued guidance to be addressed, not to the apostles as individuals, but to the corporate body of which they were the first members, that church against which the gates of hell should never prevail, and which was to be a witness for her divine founder in the uttermost part of the earth until the consummation of the world.

CHAPTER IX

THE FATAL HERESY

THE great religious movement of the sixteenth century, known as the Reformation, presents a question of totally different character to those who look at it from opposite standpoints. The Protestant, who sees in it the emancipation of the human intellect from ignorance and superstition, is at a loss to understand why the movement should have progressed so far and then stopped. Fifty years after the tide had begun to rise, it reached its flood and began to ebb. If it was the revolt of truth against error, why did truth lose its power in the hour of victory? The hardest part of the battle had been fought, and a secure vantage ground had been gained from which to prosecute other campaigns and win other victories. Whole nations had thrown off the yoke of Rome and adopted the "pure gospel." Why was that gospel, which had conquered pagan and anti-christian Rome, unable to overcome the errors and corruptions which had grown up in papal but still Christian Rome? Surely the battle of the sixteenth century, al-

ready half won, was more hopeful than the battle of the first century. Why is it that the supposed truth of the sixteenth century has not only failed to make further conquests, but has long since ceased to be an aggressive force? From the Catholic point of view, the question is easily answered. The supposed truth was not a truth at all, and has but met the common fate of error.

The question that puzzles the Catholic is why the movement ever went so far as it did, and how a religious system was ever built up upon a simple negation? To answer this question from the standpoint of human reason would involve an historical inquiry into which it is not my purpose to enter. We can safely say, however, that the movement owed such success as it attained very largely to political considerations. It was primarily a revolt against the authority of the church, which princes were inclined to favor for two reasons: (1) The spiritual authority of the church was a restraint upon the civil rulers, which was often exercised to protect their subjects from oppression. The new doctrines removed this restraint, and by making the State supreme in spiritual as well as in temporal affairs, added immensely to the power of the sovereign. (2) The donations of land and other property made by pious sovereigns and feudal lords to the religious orders, and the labors of successive generations of their mem-

bers all working for the common benefit, had greatly enriched these communities, enabling them to extend to the poor and needy that charity which, in those rude days, was not to be found elsewhere. Princes and courtiers looked with covetous eyes upon this wealth, and lent a willing ear to the new doctrines which pointed it out as legitimate spoil. Every schoolboy knows that in England the reformation was effected by the power of a despotic king and a servile parliament, and that the acceptance of the new creed was enforced by the halter and the headsman's axe, while the wealth of the religious orders was parcelled out among the royal favorites. Thus the princes of northern Europe undertook to divide among themselves the earthly kingdom of Christ, over which he had set his vicegerent to rule.

The church is so far a human institution that her work is performed through human instruments. Her divine founder promised to preserve her from error in her teaching, but he did not promise her members exemption from those weaknesses which belong to human nature. If all that Luther and his associates and their apologists have asserted as to the corruption of the clergy at the beginning of the sixteenth century had been true, it would not have justified their rebellion against the spiritual authority of the church. Christ had promised that the gates of

hell should never prevail against his church. Upon no other authority than their own human judgment, they boldly proclaimed that the promise had not been kept, and that the powers of evil had overcome the church and taken possession of it. Having determined that the church founded by Christ had been captured by the evil one, they proceeded to erect for themselves not another church, but as many others as suited their different views as to the proper plan upon which a church should be built.

The reformers professed to appeal from the authority of the church to the authority of the Bible, but the profession was a mere subterfuge. The experience of four hundred years has proved that the Bible is like a mirror, in which he who looks, sees reflected therein the notions already formed in his own mind. The professed appeal to the Bible was really a negation of authority, because the Bible is authority for whatever we choose to find in it, and the appeal is at last to our own judgment.

The new doctrine proclaimed by the reformers, that the Bible is the only rule of faith and the only authority in matters of religion, is a fatal heresy which strikes at the very root of Christianity, because it is a denial of any certainty as to God's will. It is practically a denial of revelation itself, because it asserts that the only revelation we have is one that speaks with an uncer-

tain and ambiguous voice. It is the most dangerous of all heresies, because, while other heresies pervert the faith, this one, if universally accepted, would finally destroy all faith.

But although the reformers professed this doctrine in order to justify their denial of the authority of the church, they denied it in practice. For the authority of the church they substituted their own. The infallibility which they denied to the church they claimed for themselves, and enforced the claim so far as they were able, by the sword. They denied the right of the church to interpret the Bible, and proceeded to enforce their own interpretations by drawing up creeds and professions of faith to which they compelled adherence by the authority of the civil power wherever they could. They denounced the authority of the church as an usurpation, and proceeded to organize other churches for which they claimed equal authority. All this would have been sufficiently presumptuous if they had agreed among themselves, but no two of the leaders were agreed as to the principal points of faith, or the form of church government. All this is unquestioned history, and its results are visible around us to-day.

In the beginning, the reformation involved no denial of those cardinal dogmas of the Christian faith, the Trinity of God, the Divinity of Christ, the doctrine of original sin, and the necessity

for redemption through the merits of Christ, the necessity of faith and repentance, and the inspiration of the scriptures. The revolt was against the authority of the church as an inspired teacher, and only those doctrines and forms of worship were denied which depended upon or were intimately connected with that authority. The denial of authority necessarily involved the denial of the continued presence in the church of the Holy Spirit transmitted by the apostles to their successors. This necessarily led to the abandonment of the sacraments, which could only be administered by an ordained priesthood. These changes were only the beginning. So far as the operation of the Holy Spirit promised by the Saviour as a guide to truth was admitted at all, it was confined to the individual believer, guiding him to a correct interpretation of the scriptures, but in practice it led to varying and contradictory conclusions. There is not a single dogma of Christianity which has not been denied upon the supposed authority of the scriptures. There is not a single one of the hundreds of Protestant denominations in the world to-day whose members all agree upon every point of belief. Probably there are not two persons in the world who have formed their own opinions from a study of the scriptures, who agree upon every point. The necessary result of this confusion of opinion has been to minimize the importance of

faith. Luther began by preaching that men were saved by faith alone. The tendency of Protestantism in our day is toward the directly opposite conclusion that it matters not what one believes, so long as he leads a good life. The end of that road is Agnosticism.

The abolition of the sacraments has deprived the people of those ever present helps to repentance and amendment, fortification of faith and safeguards against temptation. Especially has the abolition of the great sacrament of the Eucharist — the real presence of Christ — robbed the church building itself of its life and sanctity, and made it a cold and cheerless place, where people meet to hear moral discourses by men who claim no authority but their own fallible judgment, and to join in prayers which might as well be offered in the privacy of the home. Can we wonder that such churches remain unfilled in spite of sensational devices to attract congregations? The fact that under these circumstances real and fervent faith still exists among Protestants, that they still practice the Christian virtues, and that preachers are still found among them full of zeal for the spread of the gospel, is a testimony to the inherent power of those truths which their forefathers took with them out of the mother church. On the other hand, no impartial student will deny that those truths are losing their hold upon the hearts of those who

reject the authority of the witness upon whose testimony they were originally received. The fatal principle of private interpretation is sapping the foundations of their faith, and the Protestant religions are dying before our eyes.

CHAPTER X

THE PROVINCE OF REASON

IT is often said that the Catholic Church is the enemy of free thought; that it shackles men's consciences and forbids them the use of their reason. If free thought means liberty to hold any opinion we please, all truth is the enemy of free thought. So long as we have no knowledge upon a subject, we are at liberty to speculate about it as we please, but each fact we learn about it reduces the range of our speculation. To illustrate: Suppose a man, of whom the public has never before heard, becomes prominent in politics, writes a successful book, makes a great invention, or otherwise attracts public attention, and is much talked about. We naturally form some notion as to the kind of a man he is, his age, personal appearance, etc., more or less definite according to the degree in which we each possess the imaginative faculty. Then we hear that he is a man of middle age. We can no longer think of him as an old man or a young one. We hear that he is a small, slight man, and we can no longer think of him as a tall, stout one,

and so on. Each item of information reduces the range of our conjecture as to his appearance, until at last we see the man himself. After that we can no longer form any mental picture of him differing from that received through the eye and impressed upon the memory.

A schoolmaster who should teach his pupils that two and two make five, that the sun revolves around the earth, or that the State of Colorado is an island, would hardly escape dismissal from his situation by pleading the "God-given privilege of free thought."

Reason is the faculty by which we draw conclusions from facts ascertained through the medium of the bodily senses, and from the conclusions thus formed draw other conclusions, and thus arrive at knowledge. No truth is learned except by a process of reasoning—that is, by associating the impressions conveyed by the senses with others already existing in the mind, and drawing conclusions therefrom. Usually we are not conscious of this mental process, but it nevertheless takes place. When Robinson Crusoe saw the footprint of a man upon the sand, he was at once certain that his island had been visited by a stranger, yet this knowledge was a conclusion arrived at by a process of reasoning. His sense of sight conveyed to his mind the fact that the footprint existed in the sand. He associated this fact with the knowledge, already

existing in his mind, that nothing but a human foot could have made such an impression as that which he saw. From this association he drew the conclusion that a human foot had made the impression in the sand, and a further conclusion that a strange man had been upon the island. Crusoe was probably not conscious of this process of reasoning, the conclusion was probably simultaneous with the sight of the footprint, but it nevertheless took place; and in like manner all truth is arrived at by a process of reasoning, consciously or unconsciously, as the case may be. The truth of Crusoe's conclusion as to the presence of the stranger upon the island depended upon the truth of his major premise that nothing but a human footprint could have made the impression which he saw. If this was erroneous, his conclusion may have been wrong.

When a mother tells her child the earth is round like a ball, the child accepts the statement and believes it, although it contradicts the evidence of the child's own senses, which indicate it to be flat like a floor. This belief of the child is the result of a regular process of reasoning, the major premise being the conviction already existing in the child's mind that its mother is much wiser than itself, and that whatever she says is true. The minor premise is the mother's statement. The complete syllogism stands thus:

Whatever my mother tells me is true.

My mother tells me the earth is round.

Therefore the earth is round.

Thus the belief of the child that the earth is round, instead of being a blind, unreasoning faith, is a logical conclusion, based upon correct reasoning from sufficient premises.

The province of reason is the ascertainment of truth. When the truth has been ascertained, reason has performed its function, and the result is belief. The conclusion may be wrong, either because the premises are not true, or because the reasoning has been faulty. If we are not convinced of the truth of the premises, we can never be certain of the truth of the conclusion, no matter how correct the process of reasoning may be.

The Protestant believes certain propositions concerning religion to be true. This belief is a conclusion based upon these premises: (1) The Bible is the word of God. (2) The Bible says so and so. Therefore so and so is true. This reasoning is correct, and if the conclusion is erroneous, the fault is with the premises. The infidel denies the major, and says the Bible is not the word of God. Other Protestants deny the minor, and say the Bible does not say so and so.

The Catholic reaches his conclusion by the following reasoning: (1) The church is commissioned by God to teach the truth. (2) The church teaches so and so. Therefore so and

so is true. In this case, there is no question as to the minor premise. Unlike the teaching of the Bible, there is no uncertainty as to what the church teaches. Those who deny the Catholic's conclusion, infidel and Protestant alike, deny the major premise. Hence all the Catholic has to do is to establish that premise, and the conclusion follows. Thus the belief of the Catholic, like that of the little child, is not a blind, unreasoning faith, but a logical conclusion from premises which he accepts as true.

When the Catholic has satisfied himself of the infallible authority of the church, reason has performed its function, and his search for truth is ended. Thenceforth he has an unvarying standard by which to test every proposition presented to him. When the Protestant has satisfied himself of the infallible authority of the Bible, his search has just begun. Having no authoritative standard by which to test the conclusions to which his interpretation of the Bible leads him, and seeing that others as well qualified as himself have reached different conclusions, he must always feel that there is a possibility of his being wrong, and those who differ with him right. This, if he is a fair-minded man, makes him tolerant of the opinions of others, and the Catholic, who admits no such possibility as to his faith, appears to him bigoted and intolerant. This is a necessary result of the differing methods

by which the two arrive at their respective conclusions. Each admits the authority of an infallible teacher. To the Catholic, the teacher whom he accepts speaks with no uncertain voice, and there is no question as to its meaning. However firm the faith of the Protestant in the infallibility of the Bible, it always speaks to him with an uncertain voice, and his whole life is spent in an effort to ascertain its meaning. He refers every proposition presented to him to the Bible, but can never be entirely certain of the result. This eternal questioning becomes a habit of mind which makes it extremely difficult for a genuine Protestant to become a Catholic. His constant impulse is to test each article of Catholic belief by his own interpretation of the Bible. In thus proceeding, he can never reach the same conclusion as the Catholic, because he has not reached the premise from which the Catholic begins. It is one thing to accept the Bible upon the authority of the infallible church, and quite another to accept the infallibility of the church upon the authority of the Bible. There have been cases of persons who were received into the church and left it because they could not accept certain doctrines. Such persons were never Catholics at all. They tested some, perhaps the greater part, of the Catholic doctrines by the Protestant standard, and found them true, but they did not accept the doctrine of the infalli-

bility of the church, and without that they remained Protestants. A person might, upon the authority of the Bible, believe every doctrine which the Catholic Church teaches without being a Catholic. His belief would still rest upon the uncertain ground of his own interpretation of the scriptures, which would always be liable to change, and not upon the teaching of the church, which can never change. He would believe so and so, because he understood the Bible to teach so and so, and not because the church teaches it. The difference is radical and fundamental, and is the real dividing line between Catholicity and Protestantism. On the other hand, a person who is convinced that the church speaks with the voice of God and is willing to hear and obey that voice, is already at heart a Catholic, although he may know nothing else of Catholic doctrine. Belief in the infallibility of the teacher includes belief in whatever she teaches. All he needs to do is to make his formal submission and receive instruction preparatory to baptism. In doing this, instead of surrendering his reason, he is acting upon the conclusion to which his reason has led him.

Speculation, or conjecture, and reason are entirely different things. Where knowledge begins, free thought ends, and the matter enters the province of reason. Without knowledge reason has no place, because it has nothing upon

which to operate. Reason is the mental process by which we draw conclusions from accepted premises, that is, from facts, or what we suppose to be facts. Something must be accepted as true before we can reason at all. Otherwise we can only speculate or conjecture. We may speculate as to whether the planet Mars is inhabited, but without some fact from which to reason, we can never arrive at any certain conclusion. If the improvement of telescopes should enable us to ascertain that the so-called canals are of artificial construction, and serve the purpose of distributing the water supply upon the planet, we would then have a fact from which we might reason that the planet was inhabited by intelligent beings. We would still have left a wide field for speculation as to whether those beings were men like ourselves, but without further information we could never arrive at any certain conclusion upon the point.

Now, when the Catholic accepts the teaching of the church as true, he does not abandon his reason. On the contrary, he has a sure and firm foundation upon which to exercise it. This gives him an advantage in the search for truth in other departments of knowledge. It is a touchstone by which to test the truth of conclusions to which his researches apparently lead. He is not tossed to and fro by the shifting currents of human opinion, or disturbed by the

alleged startling discoveries of so-called scientists. He knows that if they are true, they will not conflict with the truth he holds. If they do conflict with it, they are themselves false.

While it is true that when truth has been ascertained, reason has performed its function, it is true only as to the particular truth ascertained. That truth becomes in its turn a basis for further reasoning. Facts are the foundation upon which reason builds, and each additional fact acquired broadens the scope of its operation. Certainty as to religious truth, instead of contracting the domain of reason, enlarges it.

CHAPTER XI

THE BASIS OF FAITH

I WOULD not have it thought, because of what I have said as to the weakness of Protestantism as a system of religion, that I have aught to say against Protestants themselves. I have among them many dear friends and kinsmen whose feelings I would not willingly wound. I have a very sincere admiration and respect for those whose faith in the basic truths of Christianity remains firm in spite of the difficulties under which Protestants must hold them, and I have cited the fact that they do so hold them as a proof of the reality of those truths. But there are many whose faith is not equal to such a strain, and their number is increasing daily. For them I write—for those who are weary with questioning and ready to despair of an answer, for those who are heartsick and sore with longing for the certainty that never comes.

America is still a Christian country. Our people have inherited from their fathers a reverence for God and respect for his religion, but to the greater number of them religion means "The

Bible and the Bible only." It comes to them as a problem too difficult for any mind to work out unaided, and from which the ordinary mind is prone to shrink. If the quest be hopeless, why begin the search? And thus indifference is born. The evil in the world is a real and tangible thing. It is not to be overcome by intangible abstractions. The Christian religion is more than a mere sentiment. It imposes duties and demands sacrifices. It restrains our natural inclinations, and curbs our strongest passions. To do this requires faith—a faith as definite as the duties it imposes, a faith as strong as the passions it must conquer.

The greater number of persons reared outside the Catholic Church have no conception of that church as resting upon any different foundation than do the Protestant sects. To them it is only another interpretation of the Bible. To the logical mind which reasons the matter out to a final conclusion, there is no resting place between the Catholic religion and unbelief. To such a mind, unable to accept Christianity upon the illogical grounds offered by Protestantism, and uninformed of any other, the only alternative is Agnosticism. The number who are driven to that alternative is increasing with fearful rapidity. The fatal heresy, "The Bible and the Bible only," is destroying Christianity among the descendants of the original Protestants. Agnosti-

cism is the peril of the age, the enemy that threatens our civilization.

To combat this peril, so far as my feeble powers may permit, I have endeavored to show that the errors and contradictions of Protestantism are not a part of Christianity. That Christianity stands upon a firmer and safer foundation, and that certainty of religious truth is not unattainable. I have endeavored to show: (1) That the truths proposed to our acceptance by Christianity are consistent with that natural religion which we call conscience, and not inconsistent with any truths which we are able to learn from the visible world around us. (2) That the miraculous events which prove the divine origin of Christianity are attested by evidence sufficient to warrant belief in their occurrence. (3) That the character and teachings of Christianity are inconsistent with its origin in falsehood and imposture, and (4) that the commission of the church as the custodian and teacher of the truths of Christianity is authenticated by the same facts which attest the divine origin of Christianity, and by the facts of her history and character. Whether this evidence is sufficient depends upon the reader himself. Here we touch the mystery of Man's Free Will. A mystery so profound that it is with hesitation and many misgivings I approach its consideration — a mystery which to human

reason is the most difficult of all those which religion proposes to our acceptance, and yet in another view becomes perfectly simple. This is the difficulty: How can man, the creature of God, resist his will? God wills that we shall obey his laws; how can our disobedience be reconciled with his omnipotent power? The answer is this: In asking the question, we are really putting a limit upon his power, instead of admitting it in all its fullness. He has chosen to give us the liberty of free action. If this appears to us to involve a contradiction, it is because our finite intelligence is unable to comprehend the infinitude of his power. It is another instance of the inability of the finite to measure the infinite. There can be no doubt of the existence of this free will. It is as certain that I am free to obey or disobey as that I am living. No sophistry can obscure the fact that I am a free moral agent, and responsible for my actions.

It is also true that whether we believe or deny depends upon our own will. Prejudice — preconceived opinion — unwillingness to accept the conclusion, will withstand any evidence short of mathematical demonstration. The basis of faith is the will to believe. The will to believe, co-operating with the grace of God, produces faith. God will not force you to believe, but if you

ask for it, humbly and sincerely, he will give you the grace of faith.

Reason and argument have carried thousands to the point where, as from a mountain top, they looked down upon the City of Truth in all its beauty, but they entered not in. They saw its perfect proportions, the grandeur of its architecture, its shining spires, its solid walls, buttressed by the everlasting promises of God, against whose unyielding base the waves of error have dashed in vain through all the ages that have passed, and will dash in vain through all the ages yet to come until time shall be no more — those walls within whose shelter is to be found that “peace which passeth understanding.” They saw all this, but without the magic password, “I will,” they could not pass the golden gates, and they turned away to wander again in the dreary desert of doubt, beyond which lies the fathomless abyss of despair.

Dear Reader, if you have traveled to that point, the city’s gates are open wide. The church of God, the church of the apostles, the church of your ancestors, calls you to enter. She claims you as one of the flock committed to her charge, one of the sheep she was commanded to feed. She has long mourned your absence. With the loving voice of a faithful shepherd she calls you back to that fold from which your

fathers went out four hundred years ago. He who died for you on the cross calls you: "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." But no power on earth or in Heaven will force you to enter. The free choice is yours; yours the awful responsibility.

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